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ABSTRACT

This monograph concentrates on the components of collaborative cultures and how schools develop such collaborative cultures. Urban schools face unique challenges in the frequent lack of resources and the special needs of their often disadvantaged populations. The school culture is a unique quality of the school that is a complex web of norms, values, beliefs, assumptions, and traditions built up over time. In collaborative school cultures teachers regularly engage in professional dialogue with colleagues; they share knowledge and work together to solve problems. Collegiality and collaboration have been identified as elements of successful schools. While conflict will still occur in collaborative school cultures, situations can be worked out for the good of the students through collaboration. Collegial relationships are important in collaborative schools to enhance productivity and staff development. Activities that foster these relationships and shaping a collaborative culture are outlined. A 10-item annotated bibliography is included. (Contains 32 references.) (SLD)

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Urban Monograph Series

Building Collaborative Cultures: Seeking Ways to Reshape Urban Schools

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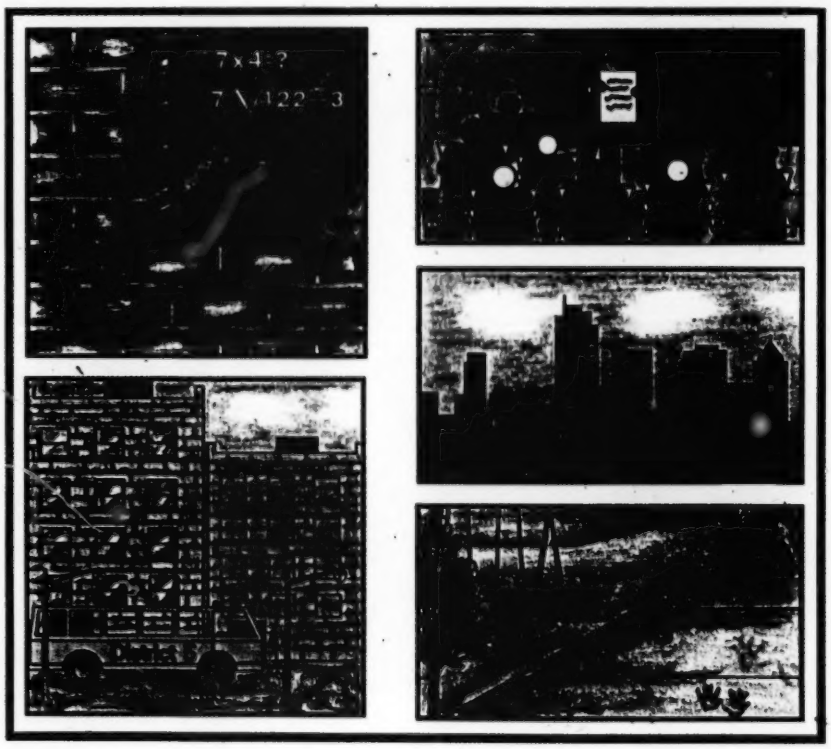

by Kent D. Peterson, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin
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Lynn J. Stinnette
Director, Urban Education

Building Collaborative Cultures: Seeking Ways to Reshape Urban Schools

Kent D. Peterson, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin
With Richard Brietzke, Purdy Elementary School, Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin

Introduction

Educators and policymakers are paying close attention to the quality of schools for children in urban settings. Indeed, their concern with reshaping urban schools is increasing as areas such as Dade County (Florida), Chicago, and San Diego attempt major transformations in urban school systems. Transforming urban schools entails many issues and possible approaches. One approach that stands out is the attempt by teachers and administrators to develop a more collaborative culture in the urban school. The intended result is a supportive, professional culture that promotes the continuous renewal of instructional methods and curricular offerings in an atmosphere of collegiality, trust, and shared mission, serving all of the students in the school. This type of school culture may not be a panacea for urban schools, but it can be a foundation for change, improvement, and renewal.

Purpose of this Monograph

This monograph concentrates on two questions: (1) What are the components of collaborative cultures? and (2) How do schools develop collaborative cultures? In seeking to answer these questions, the monograph first details the importance of collaboration, paying special attention to the ways in which collaborative school cultures serve quality teaching and learning. It then examines the variety of cultures that exist among schools. The monograph goes on to discuss how collegial relationships function in successful collaborative school cultures, how these relationships develop, and how they can be nurtured. As part of this discussion, the monograph looks at how the teachers' sense of efficacy (their ability to affect student learning) affects collaboration. The next section of the monograph suggests ways to read, shape, and reinforce collegiality, teachers' sense of efficacy, and collaboration. The final section addresses the need to use effective teamwork and teacher leadership to support collaborative cultures.

Special Challenges of Urban Schools

Schools in urban settings face unique challenges. Often, they are part of a large, centralized bureaucracy that may be slow to respond to the needs of the schools. Resources are scarce, and many buildings are in disrepair. The external context may include gang activity, widespread availability and use of drugs, and a breakdown of the local

community structure. Students come to school carrying the burdens of poverty, hunger, and poor housing. These conditions are the realities of urban classrooms. Nonetheless, research and experience show that it is possible to nurture successful urban schools in which collaboration and improvement can occur (Levine and Lezotte, 1990).

Effectively serving students in urban settings is critically important. For many of these students, schools provide the strongest, most enduring, and most systematic part of their educational world. When their schools are effective, urban children can develop the skills, knowledge, and capacities needed to be successful in work and adulthood (Levine and Lezotte, 1990). When their schools are not effective, children in urban settings must find learning outside of the schools, in hostile, often unsupportive environments. Making urban schools serve all students is key to giving these children the chance for a meaningful education.

School Culture

What Is School Culture?

Parents, teachers, principals, and students always sense something special and undefined about the schools they attend. Most schools have their own tone, climate, or "ethos" that seems to permeate all activity in the school. This unique quality of each school, the *school culture*, affects the way people act, how they dress, what they talk about or never speak of, and whether or not they seek out colleagues for help. The school culture is a complex web of norms, values, beliefs and assumptions, and traditions and rituals that have been built up over time as teachers, students, parents, and administrators work together, deal with crises, and develop unstated expectations for interacting and working together (Schein, 1983; Deal and Peterson, 1990). This moving stream of feelings, folkways, and activities flows constantly within schools (see Deal and Peterson, 1990).

This invisible, taken-for-granted flow of beliefs and assumptions gives meaning to what people say and do. It shapes how they interpret hundreds of daily transactions. This deeper structure of life in organizations is reflected and transmitted through symbolic language and expressive action. Culture consists of the stable, underlying social meanings that shape beliefs and behavior over time (Deal and Peterson, 1990, p. 7).

What Are Collaborative School Cultures?

Though all schools are different, many schools exist as isolated workplaces where teachers work largely alone in their rooms, interacting little with their colleagues and keeping problems of practice to themselves. In these schools, teachers feel separated from one another, seldom engaging their peers in conversation, professional sharing, or problem-solving (see Lortie, 1975 and Little, 1982). In other schools, however, teachers regularly engage in professional dialogue with colleagues; share ideas, knowledge, and techniques; and participate in collaborative problem-solv-

ing around classroom issues. Teachers work together to develop shared technical knowledge and discover common solutions to challenging problems (Little, 1982; Rosenholtz, 1989).

In collaborative school cultures, the underlying norms, values, beliefs, and assumptions reinforce and support high levels of collegiality, team work, and dialogue about problems of practice. In short, collaboration can affect the quality of teaching in urban settings by enriching the work of teachers.

What Is the Importance of Collaboration in Schools?

Successful schools share characteristics such as strong instructional leadership, a clear and focused mission, high expectations for students, a climate conducive to learning, opportunities to learn, regular monitoring of students and classrooms, and positive home-school relations (Levine and Lezotte, 1990). New research also ties collegiality and collaboration to positive school outcomes. Ongoing research into school culture, change, and improvement is finding that success is more likely when teachers are collegial and work collaboratively on improvement activities (Levine and Lezotte, 1990; Fullan and Hargreaves, 1991). When teachers and administrators work together, the level of commitment, energy, and motivation is likely to be higher and change efforts are more easily implemented.

Schools with professional collaboration exhibit relationships and behaviors that support quality work and effective instruction, including the following:

- More complex problem-solving and extensive sharing of craft knowledge Stronger professional networks to share information
- Greater risk-taking and experimentation (because colleagues offer support and feedback)
- A richer technical language shared by educators in the school that can transmit professional knowledge quickly
- Increased job satisfaction and identification with the school
- More continuous and comprehensive attempts to improve the school, when combined with school-level improvement efforts (see Fullan and Hargreaves, 1991, for an excellent review)

These schools feature helpful, trusting, and open staff relationships (Nias, Southworth, and Yeomans, 1989, in Fullan and Hargreaves, 1991). They also may have "a commitment to valuing people as individuals" and valuing the groups to which individuals belong (Nias, Southworth, and Yeomans, 1989 in Fullan and Hargreaves, 1991). "*Within these schools the individual and the group are inherently and simultaneously valued.*" (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1991, p.49, emphasis in original)

These settings also foster practices that support success, such as the following:

- Failure, mistakes, and uncertainty in work are not "protected and defended" but are openly shared, discussed, and examined in order to provide support and help.

- "Broad agreement on educational values" exists, but colleagues accept the natural disagreements that foster new dialogue (Nias, Southworth, and Yeomans, 1989, in Fullan and Hargreaves, 1991).

- These schools are "places of hard work, of strong and common commitment, dedication, of collective responsibility, and of a special sense of pride in the institution" (Nias, Southworth, and Yeomans, 1989, in Fullan and Hargreaves, 1991, p. 48).

- Disagreements are openly voiced more frequently and more strongly as purpose and practice are discussed (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1989, p.49).

- The teacher receives respect and consideration as a person (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1991).

- Collaborative schools have more satisfying and more productive work environments (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1991).

- Students show improved achievement (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1991).

In these schools, teachers and others lead and work together:

- "In collaborative cultures, teachers develop the collective confidence to respond to changes critically, selecting and adapting those elements that will aid improvement in their own work context, and rejecting those that will not." (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1991, p.49)

- Interdependence is valued and fostered (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1991)

- Leadership is dispersed; many teachers are leaders and the principal supports and nurtures teacher leaders (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1991).

Collaboration is not simply a group of congenial, happy teachers. As Fullan and Hargreaves point out (1991), "contentment should not be mistaken for excellence" (p. 47). In collaborative schools, the natural give-and-take of professionals means that conflict, disagreement, and discord will sometimes occur. But, these situations can be worked out for the good of students.

Thus, collaborative schools may be a way to build a professional capacity for change, improvement, and success even in the most difficult urban school.

What Types of School Cultures Exist?

School cultures vary considerably. Lortie (1975) described the culture of many schools as being oriented toward individualism, conservatism, and presentism. In these schools, teachers view themselves as working alone (individualism), they employ educational approaches that follow long traditions (conservatism), and they focus on immediate issues, not the long-term development of the school

(presentism). Little interaction, collegiality, or collaboration takes place in this type of school. In urban schools, which have a combination of complex student learning needs, external demands, and ongoing pressure to improve instruction, this type of isolated and noncollegial orientation often does not produce successful learning.

Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) described three noncollaborative cultures: (1) balkanization, (2) comfortable collaboration, and (3) contrived collegiality. These noncollaborative cultures do not encourage the level of professional interaction, collegiality, and pressure to improve that supports the needs of urban schools.

Balkanization of the teacher culture is often found in high schools and large elementary schools where separate and competing groups seek power and influence for their own ends. Competition, poor communication, and poor integration of curriculum and instructional ends characterize these schools. This isolation of competing groups discourages the rich interplay of ideas, solutions, and networking of practical knowledge that is characteristic of more collaborative settings. Neither vertical nor horizontal coordination is very successful. Consequently, the program and the students suffer. In urban schools, this competitive atmosphere takes time and energy away from serving students, when students desperately need a challenging and positive collaborative school climate.

In schools with a culture of *comfortable collaboration*, the culture carefully restricts collaboration; teachers stay out of deeper, more extended relationships that could foster problem-solving, exchange of craft knowledge, and professional support. This form of collaboration can be thin and superficial, with teachers sharing some materials, some instructional techniques, or bits of wisdom but avoiding deeper discussions of teaching, curriculum, long-range planning, and the shared purpose of schooling. Collegial interchanges, when they occur, focus on comfortable, immediate, short-term issues that are not likely to solve thornier problems facing teachers. In these schools, comfortable collaboration may seem pleasant, but it does not help teachers discover and share deeper knowledge and solve more vexing problems found in urban schools.

Cultures of *contrived collegiality* are characterized by "a set of formal, specific, bureaucratic procedures to increase the attention being given to joint teacher planning, consultation, and other forms of working together" (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1991). But formal structures are not necessarily collaborative cultures. Examples of these structures include site-based management councils, school improvement teams, or peer coaching arrangements. While these structures may bring teachers together and foster the implementation of new programs, structures alone will not necessarily foster the deeper, more substantial, and more productive informal linkages, norms, and shared commitment found in collaborative settings.

Collaborative cultures are not balkanized, simply congenial, or only structures of shared work. Rather, they are cultures that support deeper, richer professional interchange.

Collaborative Cultures

In contrast to these less potent cultures, collaborative cultures support a shared sense of purpose, focus on long-term improvement, and support networks of professionals who share problems, ideas, materials, and solutions. These cultures are not easy to develop, but they provide substantial and meaningful settings in which teachers develop craft knowledge, a powerful sense of efficacy, and a deep connection to fellow educators, parents, and students.

These cultures contain the following features:

- Regular opportunities for continuous improvement (Rosenholtz, 1989)
- Opportunities for career-long learning (Rosenholtz, 1989)
- Teachers who are more likely to trust, value, and legitimize sharing expertise; seek advice; and help other teachers (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1991)
- Decreased sense of powerlessness and increased sense of efficacy (Rosenholtz, 1989)
- Reduced sense of uncertainty associated with teaching (Lortie, 1975; Rosenholtz, 1989)
- More team teaching and shared decision-making (Ashton and Webb, 1986, in Fullan and Hargreaves, 1991)
- Sharing resources and supplies; planning cooperatively; and developing a "common sense of accomplishment" and a strong sense of efficacy (Ashton and Webb, 1986, in Fullan and Hargreaves, 1991)
- Increased confidence in and commitment to improvement of practice (Rosenholtz, 1989)
- Teachers who regularly seek ideas from seminars, colleagues, conferences, and inservice workshops (Rosenholtz, 1989)
- Increased external professional networking with other teachers, schools, programs, and restructuring associations
- A place where "continuous self-renewal is defined, communicated, and experienced as a taken-for-granted fact of everyday life [in the school]" (Rosenholtz, 1989, p. 74)

Collaborative schools are exciting, professionally rewarding places for teachers. They are places where instruction and curriculum are regularly being refined, changed, and developed. Collegial relationships among and between staff are another important feature of these schools. School norms and structures provide the purpose and the opportunity for deeper involvement and interaction on professional issues of importance to teachers.

Collegial Relationships

Collegial relationships are important in collaborative schools. Collegial relationships exist when teachers discuss problems and difficulties, share ideas and knowledge, exchange techniques and approaches, observe one another's work, and collaborate on instructional projects (Little, 1982; Rosenholtz, 1989; Smylie, 1988). In schools where collegiality is the norm, these professional, interactive, supportive relationships are accepted, enhanced, and socially encouraged (Little, 1982). Such relationships have a key impact on schools and provide the opportunity for teachers to work together on improvement activities.

Effects of Collegiality. Strong collegial relationships enhance productivity, staff development, and school improvement efforts. Several researchers have found that collegial systems generate greater productivity in school improvement efforts (Oja and Pine, 1984; Rosenholtz, 1989; Smylie, 1988). Collegiality increases the capacity for change and improvement, because collegial relationships provide powerful sources of stimulation, motivation, and new ideas (Lieberman and Miller, 1984; McLaughlin and Yee, 1988; Rosenholtz, 1989; Stallings, 1987).

Little (1982) and Rosenholtz (1989) discovered key behaviors in schools with strong collegial orientations. In these schools, teachers value professional relationships, share ideas, and readily exchange new techniques. Teachers and administrators spend time observing each other, and they instruct each other in the craft of teaching through formal and informal demonstrations. These interactions can build a powerful and shared technical language about teaching and learning that is precise and concrete. Collegial environments favor in-depth problem solving and planning. Interactions among staff and administrators foster more successful staff development, ongoing refinement of instruction, and improved teaching.

It is important to understand that collegial relationships vary in quality and strength and that these variations affect collaboration, the exchange of ideas, and school improvement.

Types of Collegial Relationships. Little (1990) identifies four types of collegial relationships found in schools: (1) storytelling and scanning for ideas, (2) aid and assistance, (3) sharing, and (4) joint work. The first three types are relatively weak in shaping deeper, more productive professional relationships, although they involve some interaction, while the fourth type, joint work, provides ample support and complex connections to improve staff relationships and collaboration:

(1) Storytelling and Scanning for Ideas.

Teachers share incomplete anecdotes about practice, complain, and gripe. Interchange is neither deep nor focused on problem solving.

(2) Aid and Assistance.

Teachers help only when asked, offer little evaluation, and do not interfere with the other teacher's work. Deep

relationships of exchange are seldom established.

(3) Sharing.

Teachers share much about themselves, use an expanded pool of resources and knowledge, and frequently share ideas and suggestions that can lead to change in the other teacher's practice. But teachers undertake little or no actual work together.

(4) Joint Work.

In contrast to the first three types of collegiality, joint work provides the opportunity for teachers to develop deeper and richer ties to fellow staff and to build more productive working relationships. Joint work is the highest and most extended form of collegiality. Teachers pursue a course of action together involving such things as team teaching, collaborative planning, peer coaching, mentoring, and, at times, action research. Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) note that joint work "implies and creates stronger interdependence, shared responsibility, collective commitment and improvement, and greater readiness to participate in the difficult business of review and critique" of their colleagues' work.

Joint work identified by Little (1982, p. 330) includes the following:

- Designing and preparing materials
- Designing curriculum units
- Researching materials and ideas for curriculum
- Writing curriculum
- Preparing lesson plans
- Reviewing and discussing plans
- Crediting new ideas and programs
- Persuading others to try an idea
- Making collective agreements to test an idea
- Inviting others to observe one's teaching
- Analyzing practices and effects
- Teaching others in informal inservices
- Teaching others formally
- Talking publicly about what one is learning
- Designing inservices for the school

Other examples of joint work include working together on school improvement planning, engaging in peer coaching and mentoring, working on interdisciplinary units, and meeting to talk about professional topics of interest, such as self-esteem or Whole Language (Johnson, 1990; Peterson and Martin, 1990). These forms of joint work shape and reinforce collaborative cultures by affording teachers the time to interact around problems of practice, fostering relationships characterized by openness and trust, developing a shared technical language, and making educational philosophies more congruent. In urban schools, joint work can cement strong collegial ties and help overcome the isolation of work.

As Susan Johnson (1990) found in her study of teachers and their work:

> The teachers made it clear that continuing collegial interaction benefits both them and their students. It sustains them through difficult times. It deepens their understanding of subject matter and pedagogy, supplies them with novel approaches, and allows them to test and compare practices. It encourages cooperative approaches to school change. It promotes high professional standards and a more coherent instructional experience for children. (p. 178)

Joint work and other opportunities to interact can foster collegiality. Collegial working relationships also increase teachers' sense of efficacy—the belief that they can affect student learning.

Fostering Collegial Relationships

Collegial relationships do not develop quickly in urban schools. The structures and norms of most urban schools discourage strong, enduring collegial relationships. Johnson (1990) and others point to important ways to foster collegial relationships. Johnson suggests that several factors seem most critical to developing these relationships including "good teachers, supportive organizational norms, reference groups for identification and action, sufficient time, and administrators who provided encouragement and accommodation" (p. 167).

First, for collegiality to take hold, the school needs "good teachers" who cooperate in making it work. Staff in schools with norms of collegiality credited teachers who "are committed and generous, who are open to change and eager to learn, and who see beyond their own private successes and failures" (p. 167). In these schools, a critical mass of teachers who are sharing, cooperative, and congenial has formed; "interpersonal harmony" is the norm; and teachers have time to develop respect and trust (p. 167).

Second, schools that foster collegiality often have organizational norms that overcome the uncertainties and isolation of teaching by supporting collegial dialogue, the exchange of ideas, debate over issues and techniques, and experimentation (Johnson, 1990). Teachers in these schools show a tendency to cooperate rather than compete, and they work in a "safe environment . . . free of criticism" (p. 170). Collegiality is nurtured, as honest debate and open disagreement combine with supportive, trusting relationships.

Third, collegiality is fostered when reference groups that support dialogue, growth, and experimentation are available to teachers (Johnson, 1990). While the entire staff of a small school could serve as a successful professional unit—supporting, encouraging, and debating—in larger schools reference groups are more likely to be grade-level teams, interdisciplinary units, or departments. When these groups support collaborative practice and professional dialogue, collegiality can grow.

Fourth, collegiality seems to wither or die when teachers are given insufficient time to engage in the kinds of joint tasks that build collegial relations and collabora-

tive successes (Johnson, 1990). Teachers need time to meet, talk, think, and interact. When time is scarce, the dialogue and exchanges of information are more often superficial and focused on immediate problems, issues, or obligations. More substantial time is needed for opportunities that foster greater collegiality, such as peer coaching, curriculum planning, or collaborative school improvement planning.

Finally, collegiality is nurtured when administrators provide encouragement and accommodation (Johnson, 1990). While most research points to the ways in which principals have provided leadership and support for improvement efforts (Deal and Peterson, 1990; Fullan, 1991), principals also can get in the way of collegiality and collaboration. Administrators can foster collegiality by promoting teacher leadership and encouraging teachers to exchange ideas and work together. This goal may require the principal to set agendas for meetings and to work on issues close to the classroom. Principals—and department chairs, in secondary schools— can create a time and place for professional dialogue and team work, provide substitute teachers and cover classes for teachers who wish to participate in collaboration activities, and make similar accommodations for groups of teachers who wish to work together on a project. Above all, fostering collegial relationships requires both time and structured opportunities for joint work.

Teachers' Sense of Efficacy in Collaborative Cultures

Another key aspect of collaborative cultures is the teachers' sense of efficacy —"the extent to which a teacher believes that he or she has the capacity to affect student learning" (Ashton, Burr and Crocker, 1984, p. 29). Teachers with a high sense of efficacy believe that their efforts and expertise will have more impact on student learning than such external variables as parental support, class size, student motivation, and student socioeconomic background (Smylie, 1988; Rosenholtz, 1989). These teachers (1) believe that student learning can be influenced by effective teaching, (2) exhibit greater confidence in their own teaching abilities, (3) tend to persist longer, (4) provide greater academic focus in the classroom, and (5) use different types of feedback than teachers with a low sense of efficacy (Smylie, 1988; Rosenholtz, 1989).

Teachers with a high sense of efficacy are more likely to adopt new classroom behaviors (Rosenholtz, 1989; Smylie, 1988); have higher student achievement (Ashton, Burr, and Crocker, 1984); engage in rich and meaningful collaborative activities and collegial interactions; and persist in providing intensive instruction even with students most difficult to reach (Ashton et al, 1982; Gibson and Dembo, 1984). In urban schools, the teachers' sense of efficacy could support continued work to help all students learn.

The teachers' sense of efficacy is closely related to the degree of teacher collaboration and may be a factor in fos-

tering collaborative cultures. Teachers who believe that they can affect their students' learning are more likely to ask for and receive technical assistance from colleagues (Little, 1982; Rosenholtz, 1989; Smylie, 1988). They seem more comfortable asking for and giving advice and sharing techniques that can be used by others, which increases the degree of collegiality and collaborative norms in the school. In short, the research suggests that these teachers are more likely to work to improve their practice (Guskey, 1988; Rosenholtz, 1989; Smylie, 1988).

In urban schools that foster a high sense of efficacy, teachers are more likely to work together for the improvement of learning. Without some strong sense of efficacy, it is easy to "blame the victim," blame the central office, or, worse, give up trying new ways to serve all students.

Collegiality, Sense of Efficacy, and Collaborative Cultures

Studies have not closely monitored the relationships between collegiality, sense of efficacy, and collaboration in urban schools. But as McLaughlin (1993) points out, schools serving students with limited English proficiency or low academic skills can promote coherent and positive professional communities when they contain "school level structures for solving problems" and "sharing information" and provide "opportunities for rethinking practices." (pp. 90-91). In these schools, teachers feel that they are part of a cohesive professional community; they also report "high levels of energy and enthusiasm" and feel more "support for personal growth and learning" (p. 94).

Norms of collegiality support regular and continuous dialogue among teachers about problems, ideas, techniques, and instructional approaches. These collegial exchanges can be enhanced and deepened when teachers have a high sense of efficacy, since teachers who believe that they can affect student learning will want to seek new ways to improve their teaching and the quality of their work. Collegiality and sense of efficacy may combine and reinforce each other in collaborative cultures in which broad-based, extensive projects and shared work provide the opportunities to develop new ways to improve classroom instruction and schoolwide programs. In short, urban schools that reinforce collegiality, build up teachers' sense of efficacy, and support collaborative work are more likely to be successful and to build an ongoing culture of renewal.

Shaping Collaborative School Cultures

School cultures vary considerably from one setting to the next. As noted above, they can be fragmented and individualized, comfortable but not collaborative. They also can be highly collaborative cultures where teachers, administrators, and others share problems, ideas, and craft knowledge—where educators work together on jointly selected programs or issues to serve students better.

Collaborative school cultures do not develop overnight, but are shaped by the ways principals, teachers, and key people reinforce and support underlying norms, values, beliefs, and assumptions. As Schein (1985) notes, an organizational culture is:

> a pattern of basic assumptions—invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with problems . . . —that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems.

The process of shaping a collaborative school culture is neither easy nor quick. It requires close attention to what is going on in the school and to educational values and daily activity. Few longitudinal studies are available on the ways in which urban teachers and administrators have shaped collaborative cultures. Nonetheless, a number of early lessons can be learned from existing research, theory, and practice (Deal and Peterson, 1990; Leiberman, 1988).

The process of shaping a collaborative school culture involves (1) reading the existing culture, (2) identifying aspects of the underlying norms and assumptions that serve the core mission of the school and the needs of students, and (3) reinforcing and celebrating those aspects that support development of a collaborative culture and changing those folkways and norms that destroy collegiality and collaboration (Deal and Kennedy, 1982; Deal and Peterson, 1990; Schein, 1985). Additionally, structures, actions, and relationships that support collaboration and the development of a professional community can be developed to reinforce collaborative cultures. As we look at the ways in which school cultures are shaped, we should remember that each school and staff must adjust, reshape, and apply these ideas to fit the special features of their school, their students, and their community.

Definitions of Success

Knowing what members of the school define as success is a way to know what is valued (Schein, 1985). Success in schools can be defined in many ways—giving students basic skills and knowledge, providing a safe and secure environment, "surviving" until the next day, preparing students for the world of work or college (Rossman, Corbett, and Firestone, 1988), and so forth. What teachers, administrators, and others view as the measures of success often shapes how they spend their time, what problems they try to solve together, and what gets their attention. Several questions can be asked to understand these definitions:

- What is a successful school year?
- What would good relations with colleagues be like?
- If you and the school were successful at school improvement, what would you have accomplished?
- What socio-emotional conditions for students, parents, and teachers would you like at your school?

- What would good relationships among students, staff, and community be like?

- What should students know and be able to do at the end of the year?

Cultural Network to Support Collaboration

The cultures of organizations often are supported by a network of cultural players who keep communication flowing, ideas spreading, and information transmitted (Deal and Kennedy, 1982). This cultural network sometimes includes gossips, storytellers, "priests and priestesses," and heroes and heroines (Deal and Kennedy, 1982; Deal and Peterson, 1990).

Gossips share important news—sometimes rumors and sometimes key information—that is of interest in the school.

Storytellers keep the history of the school alive by telling and retelling the stories, myths, and sagas of the past. If the stories they select reinforce beliefs and norms that are negative, noncollegial, or noncollaborative, they communicate the message that new staff should act in those ways. In contrast, when the stories tell of hard work, collegial sharing, and collaborative work, new staff are more likely to understand that the informal expectations are for collegiality and collaboration.

Questions to ask:

- Who are the key members of the cultural network?

- Is the cultural network supporting collegiality and collaboration? If not, how can it help?

- Can the informal network be encouraged to support collegiality, high sense of efficacy, and collaboration?

"Priests and priestesses" are staff who remember and reinforce the core traditions and folkways of the school. They are the staff who socialize and "train" the new principal or new staff in how to think and interact and what to believe about student success. Often they are the first to talk to new staff members, filling them in on "how things really work around here." In collaborative cultures, these purveyors of the culture let new people know that collegiality is valued, that collaboration is the norm, and that teachers work together for the good of students.

Questions to ask:

- Who are the staff or administrators who socialize new teachers?

- How can you provide a forum for those staff who can support collegiality and collaboration?

- What messages are communicated to new staff members?

Heroes and Heroines. Most organizations have heroes and heroines about whom stories are told. These staff members are people whose values, work, and actions exemplify the best hopes of the school. In many schools, stories are told of teachers, principals, custodians,

and others who worked hard, helped others, and were committed to students. They are the heroes or heroines who have dedicated themselves to students and colleagues and to doing what is best.

Heroes and heroines are exemplars of the core values of the culture. Honors and accolades are given to them because they represent the best that one can achieve. Sometimes highly visible and sometimes quiet and dedicated, these people demonstrate that, even in the most difficult situations, one can serve the best values and expectations of the culture. These people are teachers who spend the time and effort to reach students and see that their best ideas and techniques are shared and that the needs of other staff are supported. They are staff, parents, and community members who make a special effort to shape a culture of support and caring. And they are administrators who support the professional, collaborative needs of staff. In collaborative cultures, members who have dedicated themselves to being collegial—sharing problems, ideas, and support—can become the heroes and heroines of the school. Their commitment and special efforts are recounted to new staff and at important ceremonies and traditions.

Questions to ask:

- Who are those special people from the past or present who exemplify the highest values of the school?
- How can the school recognize these exemplars?
- How are new staff members introduced to these heroes and heroines?

Stories that communicate cultural values and norms. Research on organizations suggests that leaders often share stories of past success, special effort, and unique accomplishments to communicate the core values of the organization (Deal and Kennedy, 1982). Telling stories that exemplify the importance and quality of collegiality can reinforce collaborative cultures. When school principals and teachers tell stories to parents and new staff about staff who worked together on projects, shared ideas, materials, and support, it communicates in a dramatic way schoolwide expectations and what is important for collegial working relationships.

During interviews and initial visits, potential staff members are listening closely to learn what the school values highly and how the school works. These situations provide important times to tell stories of hard work, collaboration, and serving all students as a way of reinforcing collegiality and collaboration in the school. These stories should be concrete, engaging, and richly textured to capture the imagination of the storyteller and the listener. Staff new to a school have a heightened sense of awareness as they join the group.

Questions to ask:

- What are the stories now told about the school? If they are negative and demoralizing, find stories of success and professionalism.

- How often are these stories recounted to build pride and a sense of strong identification with the school?

- What are stories of teacher collaboration, joint work, and success that can be told to new staff and parents? (See Deal and Peterson, 1990.)

Symbolic Information

Symbolic information comes in many forms, from the logo over the door to the mission statement displayed in the front hall. This information signals values and assumptions about the school culture, reinforces key values for existing members of the school, and advertises these values to those who are new.

Symbolic information comes in many forms that reinforce collaboration. In one school, the school logo shows staff and students hand-in-hand to symbolize their work together. In another school, the motto is "We care, We share, We Dare"—directly communicating the importance of sharing across the school. In a third school, staff begin each meeting by sharing ideas, techniques, and materials that work with their students.

Questions to ask:

- What is the school logo? Motto? Mission statement? Do these symbols reflect the values of collegiality and collaboration?

- What actions and interactions model these norms?

- How often are these symbols used?

Ceremonies, Rituals, and Traditions

Most schools have some formal ceremonies that mark transitions in the school year, rituals that bind people to each other and shape the unwritten culture, and meaningful traditions that shape and mold new recruits and seasoned staff. These activities can reinforce collegiality and collaboration.

Ceremonies are complex and organized activities within the culture that celebrate successes, communicate cultural values, and recognize special contributions of school staff and students. Each transition of the year can provide time to communicate the collaborative nature of the school. For example, in one urban school, staff gather together before classes start in the fall to share their hopes, ideas, and plans for the coming year. This practice helps bind staff together in a shared experience.

In another urban school, the staff holds a special art night during which a piece of art work by each student is matted and displayed. Parents and community members are invited and special awards are given for their cooperation and help. The collaborative work of teachers is described in the carefully designed brochure for the evening.

In still another urban school, staff hold an end of the year ceremony to recognize the individual and group contributions of teachers. Sometimes funny and sometimes serious, the school communicates how it values the ways in which teachers work together.

Rituals are routines infused with deeper values. In one large urban school, staff meet for coffee and donuts once a week to share stories and recharge batteries with colleagues whom they see only occasionally. In other schools, decision-making councils begin meetings with ritual sharing of personal and professional activities before planning and decision-making begin.

Traditions are significant annual events that have a special history and meaning. Many of the routine activities of schools become traditions in which the history of the event and its importance communicate and reinforce core values and norms.

Examples of these yearly traditions are (1) a collaboratively developed, school-sponsored professional development conference for local teachers; (2) retreats for collaborative planning; and (3) regular shared development of school improvement plans and budgets.

Questions to ask:

- What are the meaningful ceremonies and traditions of the school?
- What values do those traditions reinforce?
- What activities could be made traditions? What ceremonies can mark special transitions?

Structures and Activities That Support Collaboration

While these aspects of culture building can reinforce, mold, and shape the school culture, a number of structures and programs also may foster greater collaboration. When staff have more opportunities to collaborate in activities that are positive, self-directed, and important to them, a culture of collaboration is more likely to develop (see Little, 1982; Fullan and Hargreaves, 1989).

Structures that support collaboration in urban schools include the following:

- Shared decision-making and site-based management models
- School improvement planning teams
- Faculty study groups that meet to discuss professionally relevant topics
- Regular and continuous communication of ideas, sharing of materials, and time to reflect on one's work
- Interdisciplinary curriculum projects
- Team teaching
- Peer observation
- Collective work on new instructional methods
- Collaborative decision-making and planning of staff development activities

In these organized ways, teachers have the chance to work together, get to know each other, and build on collegial relationships.

Summary. Developing collaborative cultures is not easy. It requires attention to the relationships, structures, and norms of the school. And, as Johnson (1990) notes, teachers also have a role in developing collaborative cultures:

Whatever support administrators provide, teachers themselves must ultimately take responsibility for collaboration. Teachers both constitute and create the context for collegiality. Removing the structural barriers to exchange will not alone ensure that teachers eagerly and confidently cooperate and critique each others' practice. Strong norms of autonomy and privacy prevail among teachers. Creeping fears of competition, exposure to shortcomings, and discomfiting criticism often discourage open exchange, cooperation, and growth. Until teachers overcome such fears and actively take charge of their own professional relations, teaching will likely remain isolating work. The initiative is theirs, but the responsibility for creating more collegial schools cannot be theirs alone. (p. 178-179)

Working Together in Groups: Teamwork

Collaborative cultures, as the name suggests, involve professionals working together. Collaborative schools devote considerable time to working together in groups on various task forces, projects, and programs. Working alone is easy; working together is hard. In many settings, the skills and knowledge of effective teamwork is limited. The research on teamwork (see Maeroff, 1993) suggests that teams need skills and knowledge in the following areas:

- Group roles
- Stages of group development
- Leadership in small groups
- Effective communication
- Trust building
- Problem-solving, planning, and decision-making strategies
- Effective ways to conduct meetings
- Conflict resolution
- Group process evaluation

Without skills in these areas, group planning, decision-making, and work can easily get bogged down in trivialities, conflict, and administrivia. In many urban schools, staff and administrators alike have had few opportunities to collaborate due to time constraints and pressing needs in the school. Collaborative decision-making and planning may be uncommon practices and will need added support and time. Nonetheless, in many urban schools the opportunity to talk about practice and make decisions about the school has fostered a shared sense of direction and belief in improvement. To build collaboration, developing skills in the areas listed above may be helpful.

Shaping and Nurturing Collaborative Leadership

In collaborative cultures, leadership is more widely dispersed, regularly enacted, and important to change and improvement. Every teacher can be a leader in collaborative schools (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1991). Collaboration requires shared leadership. But leadership is no longer associated only with the position that one holds. Myths and resistance from individuals keep leadership from flourishing throughout schools.

The five myths of leadership noted by Bennis and Nanus (1985) need to be overcome in collaborative cultures:

Myth 1. Leadership is a rare skill.

In many schools, teachers have leadership skills, but need the opportunities to use them.

In collaborative schools teachers, parents, and others enact leadership

Myth 2. Leaders are born, not made.

In many schools, teachers, parents, and others have become leaders through support, trust, and specific training.

In collaborative schools leaders nurture the skills and abilities of others so they can become leaders.

Myth 3. Leaders are charismatic.

Most collaborative leaders in groups are not charismatic, but are skilled, talented motivators of others.

In collaborative schools, leadership takes on many forms and emanates from many different people.

Myth 4. Leadership exists only at the top.

Leaders are found in every role and position in the school.

In collaborative schools, leadership is spread throughout the school.

Myth 5. The leader controls, prods, directs, and manipulates.

Effective leadership is not heavy-handed and pressuring.

In collaborative schools, leaders facilitate, motivate, solve problems, and build a shared sense of purpose.

Leadership can be developed. Leaders are nurtured, supported, and developed in collaborative urban cultures in a number of ways. For collaboration to work, teacher leadership needs to develop, grow, and flourish. Developing teacher leadership does not mean that teachers take on the hierarchical, authoritarian leadership styles of traditional schools. Rather it requires that teachers engage in the type of collaborative, facilitative modes of leadership necessary in successful organizations. Nurturing quality leadership is not easy, but it can be achieved. New cultures are developing at schools in every urban area. Principals are important throughout the process of supporting expanded leadership roles for teachers. As a collaborative culture becomes stronger, teacher leaders then nurture the ongoing development of the school.

In a study of teacher leaders, Leiberman, Saxl, and Miles (1988) identified key skills of leaders: (1) building trust and rapport, (2) diagnosing the organization, (3) dealing with the collaborative process, (4) using resources, (5) managing work, and (6) building skill and confidence in others. These skills support the interactions of colleagues and staff as they engage in joint work, collaborative projects, and collegial problem solving. Teachers can develop these skills in urban schools through training, informal learning, and practice. These six aspects of leadership may be necessary for teachers to reinforce collaborative cultures.

Building trust and rapport. All leaders find ways to increase the trust in the group and rapport in working together. Especially in the difficult and demanding situations facing urban educators, trust building requires considerable attention. Leaders learn to address resistance in the group and find ways to overcome it without coercion. Leaders also engage in open and supportive communication as the work progresses. And leaders develop "shared influence" in the process, encouraging the active participation of everyone. In urban schools, building trust and rapport are key to creating the motivation needed for school improvement.

Diagnosing the organization. Teacher leaders in collaborative cultures support the problem finding and problem solving work of colleagues. They know how to collect and analyze student performance data. They are able to make a diagnosis of the educational situation and to share it in a clear and helpful way. They sometimes place their diagnosis within some conceptual framework to aid in understanding the nature of the instructional or curricular issue. Diagnosis of educational problems models for others the kind of deeper analysis that supports rich collaborative problem solving and improvement efforts.

Dealing with the collaborative process. Collaboration is a complex and demanding activity. It requires developing trusting, collegial relationships; dealing with conflict; and maintaining clear focus. In urban schools, teacher leaders help this process to succeed by knowing how to build collaborative relationships, how to mediate conflict as it develops, how to deal with confrontation in a productive way, and how to maintain the focus on students.

Using resources and managing the work. Any form of joint work needs resources and some coordination. Effective urban teacher leaders know how to tap into the resource network to gain materials, ideas, time, and people to help. Resources, personal and financial, are often at a premium in urban schools, so teacher leaders will need to know how to seek resources, find time, and connect to key sources outside of the school. Learning to "work the bureaucracy" can bring needed resources to the school.

Collaborative work also requires more planning, organizing, and scheduling. It requires coordination. Teacher leaders maintain the flow of collaborative activities by helping manage this work, smoothing the work flow, and facilitating the direction and progress of work. Given the demands in urban

schools, leaders who help plan and organize joint work are very important.

Building skill and confidence in others. Leaders also take on the key task of building greater skills and deeper confidence in their coworkers. As leaders, teachers in collaborative cultures help others develop leadership skills, planning skills, and problem solving skills. They see their role as increasing the skills and knowledge of others through examples, ideas, and support. Additionally, teacher leaders in collaborative cultures help increase the confidence that others have in themselves and in the group as a whole. These efforts should also pay off in increased teacher sense of efficacy —the belief that they can have a substantial impact on student learning. With increased confidence and a sense of efficacy, urban teachers are more likely to engage in school improvement efforts.

Summary and Conclusions

Principals and teachers face special challenges in urban settings, but it is possible and important to transform their schools into settings in which all students are successful and all teachers continually improve. In schools that have collaborative cultures, teachers work together continuously to fine tune and improve their instructional methods and curricular offerings. All students can benefit from this approach. The kinds of professional communities that can support change and improvement might develop when teachers share ideas and problems, take on leadership and followership, increase their sense of efficacy, and have traditions and ceremonies that celebrate successes. As Johnson (1990) has noted, principals are important, but teachers also must motivate and lead. Developing strong, trusting collaborative cultures in urban schools may help build a foundation for continued growth for students, teachers, and principals.

Annotated Bibliography

(See References section for all citations.)

Barth, Roland. *Improving Schools from Within.*

This book on improvement lead by teachers and principals is highly readable. It focuses on the development of a "community of learners" and articulately discusses how teachers and principals can work together to improve the school. The book lists specific ways to work together, learn together. and improve together. The sections on becoming a community of learners and leaders describes how schools can articulate goals, provide authority to teachers, and engage everyone in a dialogue about what's important. This book is especially useful for schools who wish to start to collaborate and want a practical and clearly written book on the subject.

Deal, Terrence, and Peterson, Kent. *The Principal's Role in Shaping School Culture.* OERI: U.S. Department of Education.

This book describes ways that school principals shape school culture. While focusing on the school principal, specific examples of how teachers and students can develop rituals, traditions, and ceremonies that support collaboration are given. Leadership roles such symbol, potter, poet, actor, and healer are described and illustrated. This book is particularly useful to understand the idea of school culture. It gives concrete case studies and examples of cultures in different settings.

Fullan, Michael, and Hargreaves, Andy. *What's Worth Fighting For: Working Together for Your School.*

Fullan and Hargreaves have written an enormously useful book about collaborating in schools. The book details the problems of collaboration in schools, the research on the topic, and specific guidelines to help teachers and others develop better collaboration. Core topics are the problems of collaboration, developing teachers who are professionals, and shaping collaborative school cultures.

Johnson, Susan Moore. *Teachers at Work: Achieving Success in Our Schools.*

This study uses interviews and other data about teachers and their work to describe how schools can support quality work settings for teachers. It is a rich study of how teachers view their work and the problems in building collaborative schools. Filled with excellent examples and quotes from teachers, it provides a complete picture of the work of teachers. Johnson describes the problems of collaboration, but also lists many of the advantages. This book provides useful background to anyone interested in a broader understanding of teachers in their schools.

Little, Judith. "Norms of Collegiality and Experimentation: Workplace Conditions of School Success."

This article is the classic study of collegiality among teachers. Based on research in many schools, this study found norms of collegiality and improvement to be important to school success. It is especially useful to see where many of the ideas of collegiality and collaboration originated.

Lortie, Dean. *Schoolteacher.*

Schoolteacher identifies three basic orientations of teachers: conservatism, individualism, and presentism. He details the history and development of teaching as an occupation and the problems of the complexity and uncertainty of teaching. This book is particularly helpful for understanding the history of teaching and the demands of teaching as an occupation.

Louis, Karen, and Miles, Matthew. *Improving the Urban High School: What Works and Why.*

This study is one of the most widely read examinations of school improvement in urban settings. Based on data collected in urban schools, the book provides case studies of successful school improvement in several high schools. The second part of the book details features of school improvement found in these schools. Both case studies and features of school improvement can be read independently. Each is an excellent source of ideas and concrete examples. While it focuses on urban high schools, this book also can provide insights and useful ideas for schools at any level.

Maeroff, Gene L. *Team Building for School Change: Equipping Teachers for New Roles.*

This book provides specific ways for schools to use teams to support change and improvement. Clearly written and well organized, the book provides useful suggestions as well as guidelines for working together. Specific chapters deal with selecting teams, bonding and growing, time, and obstacles to overcome. (In addition, a shortened version of this book and its ideas was published in the March 1993 *Phi Delta Kappan.*)

Rosenholtz, Susan. *Teachers' Workplace: The Social Organization of Schools.*

This study of schools, teachers, and leadership describes the importance of teachers' working together as professionals. The insightful descriptions of teachers advances our understanding of collaboration among teachers in schools. This book provides useful data and research-based knowledge.

Bibliography on Restructuring.

This bibliography on school restructuring is available from the Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools, University of Wisconsin-Madison (WCER 1025 W. Johnson St., Madison, WI 53706). Providing several hundred citations to useful readings on school restructuring, curriculum and instructional reform, the professional life of teachers, school governance, and collaboration with the community, this list is one of the best available.

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